

the long grass or bushes, where they have lain during the day, to feed; and at that time they can be heard calling to each other in every direction. Their note is a loud and oft-repeated whistle uttered in a low key.

RHEA DARWINI.

Common on the higher tableland, but rarely seen in the immediate neighbourhood of the colony. The feathers of this bird form the chief article of barter which the Indians give in exchange for yerba, sugar, &c. During my visit we made two hunting-excursions in search of Rheas and Guanacos. The former sometimes lie very close, usually under the shelter of a bush, and will then allow you to pass within a few yards of them without moving. When flushed they endeavour to run with the wind, partly opening their wings, which act as sails. It requires a good dog to overtake an old bird when he gets a start of a hundred yards. I was told that the colonists have found as many as thirty-two eggs in one nest, and when such a number is laid they consider them the produce of more than one female; they sometimes flush the male bird from the nest. It is an event of common occurrence to find single eggs about the campo smaller than those in nests; and these are supposed to have been dropped by immature birds which have not commenced to lay regularly.

IV.—*Note on the South-American Song-Sparrows.*

By P. L. SCLATER.

(Plate I.)

It is a singular fact that, while *Zonotrichia pileata* is generally diffused over Central and South America, and is in many places a most abundant species, the only other two members of the same genus that occur within the neotropical region are confined to La Plata and Patagonia. So little known, moreover, are the latter, that, with a tolerably extensive acquaintance with South-American birds, I have never met with but

one or two specimens of either of them, whereas the former is one of the very commonest species in collections.

The two southern Song-Sparrows *Zonotrichia canicapilla* and *Z. strigiceps* were both discovered by Mr. Darwin during his celebrated "Naturalist's Voyage," and described by Mr. Gould in the third volume of the 'Zoology of the Voyage of the 'Beagle'.' I will say a few words about what we know of each of these birds.

Z. canicapilla is generally of the size and form of *Z. pileata*, though the legs and feet, judging from the examples now before me, are more slender. The under surface closely resembles that of *Z. pileata*; and there is the same bright rufous patch on each side of the neck. The upper surfaces of these two birds are also much alike, except as regards the head. This in *Z. canicapilla* is of a uniform grey, with narrow white superciliaries, and, as will be seen from the figure (Pl. I. fig. 1), shows no signs whatever of the two broad black lines on the sides of the crown which distinguish *Z. pileata*. Mr. Darwin obtained his specimens of *Z. canicapilla* at Port Desire, in Southern Patagonia, and on Tierra del Fuego, and found it nesting at the former locality. Mr. Durnford, as recorded above (p. 33), found it to be the "common Sparrow" of Chuput, which is a rather more northern locality than Port Desire. Dr. Cunningham obtained it at Ancud, in the Island of Chiloe, and at Sandy Point, in Southern Patagonia; but in our list of his collection (Ibis, 1870, p. 499) we did not recognize his skins as distinct from *Z. pileata*. I remark that in Gray's 'Hand-list' (ii. p. 94) *Z. canicapilla* is referred to *Fringilla australis*, Lath.; but in my opinion Latham's description is too vague to enable any certain conclusion to be drawn from it.

Z. strigiceps, as will be seen by the figure (Pl. I. fig. 2), is much more distinct from *Z. pileata* in plumage, and has shorter wings and more feeble feet, though not essentially different in form. It may at once be known from both the allied South-American species by the absence of the chestnut patches on the sides of the neck and of the lateral black marks on the throat. The feathers on the crown of the head are dark red, passing into cinereous on the nape, each feather

having a median longitudinal band of black, which renders the specific term *strigiceps* very apposite.

Mr. Darwin gives as the locality of this species Santa Fé, on the Rio Paraná. It is singular that in all the collections from the Argentine Republic which I have examined of late years, I have never met with an example of it, the only specimen I have seen being one in my own collection, which I obtained in exchange from Mr. Gould some years ago, and which is probably one of Mr. Darwin's original skins. This, however, is most likely due to the fact that most of the Argentine collections have been procured from the vicinity of Buenos Ayres, and that Santa Fé, as pointed out by Mr. Darwin*, belongs to a different fauna.

V.—*Ornithological Letters from the Bremen Expedition to Western Siberia.* By OTTO FINSCH, Ph.D., Hon. Memb. B.O.U., Chief of the Expedition.

On board the steamer 'Beljetschenko,'
River Ob, 3rd July, 1876.

SIR,—I beg leave to send you a few notes relating to the birds observed by us during our recent trip through Western Siberia and into the northern parts of Turkestan and China.

Though we left Nishni-Novgorod on the 19th March, we did not reach Omsk until the 20th of April, the roads being in a bad state, owing to the forwardness of the spring, and the consequent melting of the snow. No opportunities offered for making any observations on the birds of the country passed through, except as regards the few species seen on the road-

* "In the morning we arrived at Santa Fé. I was surprised to observe how great a change of climate a difference of only three degrees of latitude between this place and Buenos Ayres had caused. This was evident from the dress and complexion of the men, from the increased size of the ombu trees—the number of new cacti and other plants, and especially from the birds. *In the course of an hour I remarked half-a-dozen of the latter which I had never seen at Buenos Ayres.* Considering that there is no natural boundary between the two places, and that the character of the country is nearly similar, the difference was much greater than I should have expected."—*Narr. Voy. Beagle*, iii. p. 147.



J. G. Keulemans lith.

M & N Hanhart imp

Fig 1. ZONOTRICHIA CANICAPILLA.
2. " " STRIGICEPS.